

SAVE THE DATES FOR 2022

August

- 9 Zoom Social with Grace Mendez
- 16 Just for the Fun of it Zoom with Vicki Smurlo, BVM
- 17 Cyber Cluster with Jeanie Fritscher

September

- 11 Diamond Jubilee Mount Carmel Bluffs
- 13 Zoom Social with Grace Mendez
- 20 Just for the Fun of it Zoom with Vicki Smurlo, BVM
- 21 Cyber Cluster with Jeanie Fritscher
- 25 St. Mary Alumnae Luncheon, Lombard, Ill.

October

- 7-9 ACC Meeting, Chicago
- 11 Zoom Social with Grace Mendez
- 18 Just for the Fun of it Zoom with Vicki Smurlo, BVM
- 19 Cyber Cluster with Jeanie Fritscher
- 22 BVM Network on Women's Issues
- 23 The Immaculata Alumnae Luncheon, Niles, Ill.

November

- 8 Zoom Social with Grace Mendez
- 15 Just for the Fun of it Zoom with Vicki Smurlo, BVM

For a complete list of events, visit the members' website: members.bvmsisters.org
Resources>Calendar of Events.

Contact Us

For more information about associates and events, contact: bvmassociates@bvmsisters.org.

Submit your associate events, stories, and photos to: swright@bvmsisters.org.

For a list of volunteer opportunities, visit: bvmsisters.org/volunteer.

BVM Associate News will be emailed and posted on the associate page of the members' website. Copies mailed on request.



Words expressing The Heart of BVM.

BVM Associate News

A Faithful Present, a Hopeful Future

FREEDOM • EDUCATION • CHARITY • JUSTICE

Summer 2022

Dear Circle of Friends,

WOW! What a tremendous week we had at the Congregational Assembly. Thank you to those who were able to be with us, in-person or virtually. It was a thought-provoking, stimulating, and invigorating experience.

We started on Wednesday, June 22, at the Best Western Plus in Dubuque, Iowa. After three years, it was wonderful to be together again in our circle of friends, where we are all welcome.

The opening prayer reminded us of our unity and interconnectedness, celebrating our oneness across the cosmos, across the planet, and throughout our human family.

Now is the time for each of us to recommit to doing something new, making new paths, and moving in new directions.

We learned about The Circle Way (TCW), which is an opportunity for everyone to share what is on their heart at the moment. This methodology is based on ancient circle practices and refined by The



Associate Coordinator Team (ACT):
Jeanie Fritscher,
Grace Mendez,
and Eileen O'Shea

Circle Way: A Leader in Every Chair authors Christina Baldwin and Ann Linnea. TCW is a way of being in conversation which supports the human desire to move forward together in life-giving ways.

Day one ended with 49 BVMs and other local congregations picnicking at Eagle Point Park as guests of the Serra Club. At the assembly site, 16 associates and BVM Mary Frances Reis, gathered in the Eagle Point Room to discuss "See, We Are Doing Something New" and share insights and visions for their involvement in the future of association.

Assembly continued on p. 2.



Associate Holly Bernhardt joined with the assembly in prayer as part of the bread blessing during the closing ritual for the 2022 Congregational Assembly.

Assembly continued from p. 1.

On day two, we were led into meditative quiet by the four IHM Sisters from Vietnam who live at Mount Carmel Bluffs.

The sisters sang in their language. The accompanying music, glimpses of their beautiful country and native peoples, and the expressions on their faces lifted us into prayer.

We were called to look into living more profoundly into the mystery of God, sharing in sacred conversations to bring forth a word of wisdom from each circle. May the Holy Mystery enlighten your days and illumine our lives.

On day three, we were invited to listen to the voices and stories of Indigenous American sisters and brothers. This shed light on Directional Statement 1: Spirituality/Worldview. "Seek conversation with and listen deeply to people with divergent perspectives, cultures, and experiences." Indigenous Americans have lived in solidarity with the land, water, air, and all creatures

great and small . . . we have much to learn from them in how to care for Earth.

The presentation given by the Office of BVM Life and Mission demonstrated how we are following the spirit of Mary Frances Clarke's focus on building relationships by sharing stories, deepening spirituality, and responding to critical human needs through interactions, presence, and communication.

On day four, we were invited to pray over the diverse voices of the world related to Directional Statement 2: Inequality. "There is a deep grief for the current situations of injustice in our world that calls us to be and become the face of an inclusive, welcoming, and merciful Church working for a just, equitable, and sustainable world in which all flourish."

During the session, "Spiraling in Our Lived Future," BVM President LaDonna Manternach asked all to look truthfully and honestly at who we

are, both our passion and limitations, and what it means to engage in the charism of Mary Frances Clarke today and consider how we can create space for God's newness to unfold. "We each stand on the spiral that gives different perspectives. May these perspectives help us to notice God's pathway to live our future."

I hope that this article gives you a flavor of the rich content shared and experienced during the 2022 Congregational Assembly.

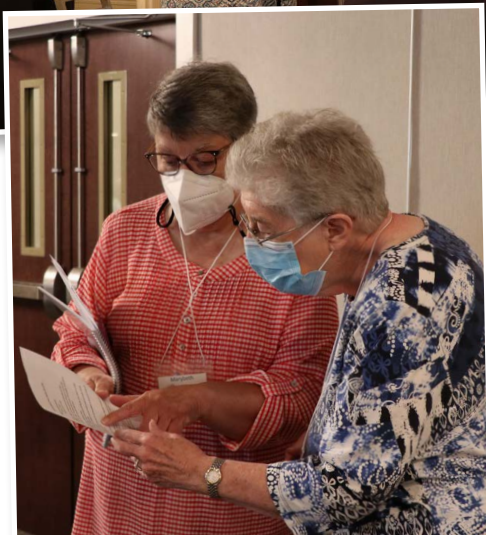
—Jeanie Fritscher, for the ACT

For more about the 2022 Congregational Assembly, log in to members.bvmsisters.org. Select the heading "Meetings/Committees" and the subheading "Congregation Assembly."

Recordings of the Assembly are available at: portal.stretchinternet.com/bvmsisters.



Associate Marybeth Coleman (l.) shares information with BVM Mira Mosle during the 2022 Congregational Assembly, held at the Best Western Plus in Dubuque, Iowa.



Associates Nancy McCarville and Jeanie Fritscher and BVM Anne Marie McKenna look on as they stand awaiting their chance to respond to questions raised by the co-facilitator, Melissa Bailey-Kirk, shown on the screen.



Just a few of the special take-home treasures from the assembly included ink pens with the new congregational logo, candy bars from the Office of BVM Life and Mission, polished glass pieces from the deconstructed BVM Center Chapel, and a laminated example of a natural spiral.

Associate Reflections on the 2022 Congregational Assembly



"I had intended to be at the Assembly in person but am so grateful that the virtual opportunity was available.

There were so many inspiring presentations that it is difficult to choose one. The one that stayed with me the most was the sharing of the land used by Indigenous Americans and trying to relate to all that has been done to reconnect with the First Nations.

Now I want to hear and do more and be and stay connected to the First Peoples of this land we share. Jonathan Buffalo will be speaking at Shalom in September, and I signed up to attend. Thank you to all who planned and made this Assembly available to all of us."

—Associate Marilyn Wasmundt



"As we slowly emerge from the pandemic, this was an opportunity to dialogue and break bread with many others; also, now that I am retired, it is more possible for me to devote most of a week to a gathering such as this. The highlight of the Assembly for me was the panel consisting of BVMs of color . . . it was deeply moving. There is much work yet to be done to move beyond racist assumptions and practices. I hope to become more actively involved with associate activities."

—Associate Norm Freund



"Attending the 2022 Assembly was a 'must do' event! After 8 months of Zoom meetings responding to the directional statements, I wanted to enjoy how they could be worked into the program. Each session of the Assembly informed and motivated me as a BVM associate."

—Associate Nancy McCarville



"I was hoping to meet some BVMs and associates whom I did not know. Happily, I was at a table with a few 'new-to-me' sisters throughout the week. I was pleased that each day we changed tables so I could meet more BVMs and associates. It thrilled me that I didn't just get to meet these women, but to share experiences, opinions, and viewpoints. I gained a deeper appreciation for each unique person. Going forward, I am joining the group working toward reparations work for the Meskwaki people."

—Associate Maureen Frommelt



"I attended the Assembly to 'see' sisters and associates, share with others about the Directional Statements and where we have been and where we might be going, and to be informed as to the work of the Assembly as a member of the Continuity and Coordination Committee (CCC). Since I could not be there in person, the time spent in our Zoom groups sharing was the highlight for me.

We have been using the Circle Way for our CCC meetings and it was great to see how well it worked at the Assembly. The Circle Way facilitated thoughtful sharing and ensured the participation of everyone in the group.

The reports by the Council were informative and made me aware of how much more planning and work there is ahead for the Congregation. Affirming a draft of new wording for the BVM *Constitutions* and *Directory* as well as making decisions about the endowment, cemetery, archives, and conservancy of the bluffs. A full plate for the Board of Directors. I have the goal of remaining an active and involved member of the CCC to ensure continuity in the work of the Congregational Assembly. Next June will be here soon! Peace and blessings."

—Kimberly Emery

Associates in Action



Associates Nancy Niles and Jeanie Fritscher, BVMs Roberta White and Mary Jean Ferry, and Associate Grace Mendez attend a little fiesta to celebrate being together during the congregational assembly.



Associates Marabeth Freund, Norm Freund, and Sean Bradley enjoy a happy moment together at a gathering of past and present BVM sisters and associates who are "Clarkies" hosted by the Freunds.



Clockwise (l.): Associates Suzie Wright, Sherry Jacobs, Eileen O'Shea, Maureen Frommelt, Lori Ritz, Norm Freund, Mary Chapman, Jeanie Fritscher (unseen), Marilyn Wasmundt, Grace Mendez, and Christine Olsem enjoy lunch at Caroline's Restaurant in Dubuque, Iowa.

Dubuque Area Associates joined the Associate Coordinator Team while meeting in Dubuque, Iowa. A "Spring Fling Lunch" was held at Caroline's Restaurant on May 4. It was a delightful gathering, sharing stories over events in the past few months, bringing one another up on current projects within the BVM community and family life, and hopeful future activities and vacations. The laughter and hugs made for a joyful and loving reunion enjoyed by all.

—Associate Mary Chapman



Associates Blanche and David King left their home in Minnesota to spend a little vacation time in Grand Canyon.

A Surprise Encounter

Three associates, Laura Field from Chicago, and Linda Plamondon and Jim Tackes from Missoula, Montana, attended the Spiritual Directors International (SDI) Engage 2022 Conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Linda shares, "As I recall in one of the SDI conference plenary sessions, the speaker asked for questions/comments from the audience. Laura stood up and introduced herself, followed by her comment. I recognized her as the facilitator who had given the associate retreat that Jim and I had attended at Mount Carmel 6 years earlier, in the summer of 2016.

I felt a strong desire to let her know how that experience had impacted our lives. Not only was her retreat the first time Jim and I met, but it also lifted some of the grief we were both carrying at the time. We married 2 years later. Her 'call to joy' was definitely a calling for us."

—Associate Linda Plamondon



Associates Linda Plamondon, Jim Tackes, and Laura Field are at the SDI Engage 2022 Conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Top (l.): BVM Kathy Conway, Associates Kathy Weishaar, and Helen Gabel; Middle: BVMs Marie Greaney, Pat Bombard, and Barbara Gaul; Bottom: Associate Ann Marie Long; Not pictured: BVMs Rose Marie Lorentzen, and Colleen McGinnity.



Cluster Klatch: May 2022

The Chicago Southwest cluster has met monthly since 2006. Until the pandemic, we met in person at the home of BVMs Barbara Gaul and Theresa McNerney (deceased). Due to the pandemic and the moves of some of our members to Mount Carmel Bluffs, we have been meeting on Zoom.

Lately, we have been discussing responses for the statement to the Synod and have posted them on Viewpoints on members.bvmsisters.org. During our May cluster, we discussed the draft statement Mary Ann Zollmann and Jackie Cramer sent us that will be sent to the Synod.

—Associate Kathy Weishaar

An Associate You Should Know: Dan Abben



Dan Abben met BVMs when he enrolled at Clarke University to major in English and religious studies. Among his instructors were Sara McAlpin, Pat Nolan, and Paulette Skiba. For three years he was campus liturgist.

After graduation, he became an associate in 2005 while working as a director of religious education.

In 2008, Dan moved to Chicago to begin an evening MA program in public service management at DePaul University. He worked in the sales department at Loyola Press for BVM Kathleen Sinclair and for the editorial department. In 2012, Dan began a full time PhD program in organizational psychology at DePaul. Now he teaches

psychological measurement and statistics at DePaul.

Throughout this time, Dan belonged to a series of clusters. Now, he belongs to the Archer Avenue cluster. He was on the planning committees for a regional meeting and a Senate. He has been on the Associate Coordinating Committee (2006-2008), the Communications Advisory Council (2010-2014), and the Salem gardening crew. Recently, he joined the Shareholder Education and Advocacy (SEA) group.

During the 2022 Congregational Assembly, Dan was a virtual participant while teaching summer school in Chicago. He took an active part through Zoom, a familiar medium because he uses it for DePaul courses.

—Mary A. Healey, BVM

Did You Know?
*BVM Association
turns 50 in
June of 2023!*

How do you want
to celebrate this
awesome milestone?

Send ideas to your
Associate Coordinator.

Meet New Associate Jerry Delaney



Geraldine "Jerry" Delaney lives in Chicago. She was born in Lincoln, Neb., and grew up in Kansas and Missouri. She is a former BVM and an active member of the Set of 1961. She graduated from Mundelein College in Chicago in 1966. She is a mother of six adult children and is a grandmother too. She is retired from paralegal work and is still active in political activism and social justice work.

After the Set of 1961 held their set's

60th virtual reunion, Jerry began her journey of associate discernment with BVMs Irene Lukefahr, Joellen McCarthy, Dee Peppard, Sandy Rodemyer, and Associates Anne Marie Long and Kathleen Maas Weigert as her companions.

In a letter she wrote seeking to start her discernment process, Jerry wrote, "I don't know if this is the Spirit calling me to apply to become a BVM associate, but I decided to listen this time and pursue this journey. Keeping a bond with my fellow sisters in our set has been very important

to me. I felt branded by the BVMs to always pursue justice, which I believe is the core message of the Gospels."

In her letter of affirmation for Jerry's acceptance as an associate, BVM Joellen McCarthy wrote, "Three dimensions of Jerry's life stand out for me to readily support her as an associate: her commitment to community, her passion for justice, and her sensitivity to the Mystery in her life."

—Associate Coordinator Eileen O'Shea

BVM Associate and Former Clarke Faculty Member Takes on National Role



Dr. Sherry Warren, MSW, PhD, recently stepped into the position of Minister of Women's and Gender Justice for the United Church of Christ. Dr. Warren served Clarke University for three years as an assistant professor in social work, then joined the faculty at University of Wisconsin at Green Bay for three years.

While working at Clarke, Dr. Warren was able to work with the BVMs to

accompany students to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) where she learned about the needs of women and girls all over the planet.

In her new role with the United Church of Christ (UCC), Dr. Warren will be working on national policy concerns that affect women and girls, female bodies, sexual minorities, and other concerns that have policy implications.

She will be working with a nationwide team of advocates and

with congregations of the UCC that need guidance and training in advocacy, policy practice, and taking action. Her experiences at CSW have been integral in her development and role in this newly revitalized position with the UCC.

In doing this work, Dr. Warren feels that she is living the BVM core values of freedom, education, charity, and justice.

—Associate Sherry Warren

Pondering Summer Gratitude



There is a unique beauty to each season of the year, but summer is my favorite. More than once over the course of the last couple of months I have experienced a sense of awe and gratitude at the abundance Mother Earth offers during this season. It is an unending feast for the senses.

Here in Iowa, I am drawn to the sounds of rain and thunder, the birds, crickets, frogs, and cicadas.

There is a plethora of color all around in the flowers, gardens, and trees.

Tasting fresh sweet corn or a tomato that has just been picked are

also moments to savor. These are colors, smells, and tastes that we only experience a few months of the year. Too often, I take them for granted.

This summer, I have been trying to pay attention to that feeling of awe and gratitude. I want to let it soak in and appreciate the moment.

As Earth prepares to begin her transition to fall, I carry with me a question that Robin Wall-Kimmerer asks in her book, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, "The robin sings her thanks at sunrise every morning. Ask yourself, 'What do I do to say thanks?'"

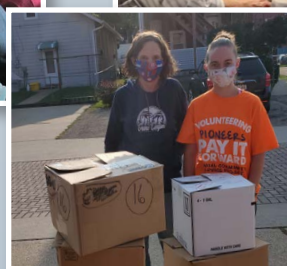
—Associate Katie Anders



"Association with the BVMs has encouraged me to live a more present life in Christ by seeing a 'God life' in all people.

The sisters have taught me to become more conscious of world needs all around me and to find ways to improve them. The BVMs are wonderful companions for my life journey."

—Associate Kathy Weishaar



An Associate You Should Know: Virginia Piecuch



Active in the alumni associations of St. Mary High School and Mundelein College in Chicago, Virginia Piecuch

kept up friendships with many BVMs. She later joined the Mundelein College Women's Network started by Katharine Forsyth, BVM, for alumnae and students employed in business.

Virginia worked at Beverly Bank and was vice president when she resigned to attend Chicago Theological Union (CTU). When Virginia graduated in 1993, she was hired as dean of students.

Although she had learned about the affiliates (later renamed associates) program at a Network meeting during

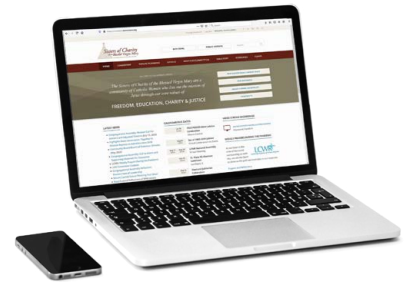
her CTU studies, she didn't have time to pursue it. When she was ready to apply, she discovered that she already had absorbed it from her many BVM friends.

In 1998, Virginia became Program Coordinator at the Center for the Study of Religious Life at CTU, retiring after ten years. She is still busy as recording secretary of the Intercommunity Housing Corporation, proofreader for *Horizon*, a water colorist, and active member of the community at McHugh Apartments where she celebrated her 25th anniversary as an associate. Over the years, Virginia served on several associate and BVM committees.

—Mary A. Healey, BVM

SAVE THE DATE: *BVM Network on Women's Issues*

October 22, 2022
Watch for more details.



Need Help Accessing the BVM Members' Website?

Associates, if you need help accessing the members' website, contact Suzie Wright, administrative assistant to the Office of BVM Life and Mission at **563-585-2860**. Suzie is happy to assist you.

We Remember Our Associates

Full obituaries are posted online at:
bvmsisters.org/associate-obituaries.



**Shirley Molumby
Eckholm**

July 29, 1933–
March 14, 2022
Commitment:
Sept. 26, 2003



**Janice M.
Del Fiocco**

March 25, 1942–
June 5, 2022
Commitment:
Jan. 29, 2006



**Elizabeth
Fitting**

January 27, 1941–
June 23, 2022
Commitment:
Dec. 3, 2005

*"Thank you, Loving Creator
...
for disturbing us, challenging
us, urging us by your grace to
grow deeper and more whole."*

Out of the Ordinary by Joyce Rupp

BVM Mission:

We are the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a community of Catholic women called to live the mission of Jesus through our core values of

FREEDOM, EDUCATION, CHARITY, AND JUSTICE.

563-588-2351
[BVMSISTERS.ORG](https://bvmsisters.org)
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